
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE 05.03.18

Present: Councillors, Annwen Daniels, Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Eryl Jones-Williams, Dafydd Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Jason Wayne Parry, Rheinallt Puw, Peter Read, Dewi Roberts, Angela Russell, Elfed W. Williams and Gareth Williams

Also in Attendance: Gwenan Mai Roberts (Licensing Manager), Siôn Huws (Solicitor) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

None to note

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee, that took place on 11 December 2018, as a true record.

5. MINUTES OF THE GENERAL LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEES

Submitted - for information, the minutes of a meeting of the General Licensing Sub-committee that took place on 12.01.2018.

6. SPECIFICATION FOR HACKNEY VEHICLE METERS

A report was submitted by the Head of the Environment Department outlining the background and giving an update on developments with hackney vehicle meters (taximeters). The Committee was requested to approve a proposal to amend the conditions as part of the wider review of taxi licensing policies and conditions currently being reviewed. A list of the current conditions together with the proposed conditions were presented.

It was highlighted that one of the areas of discussion was the rise in use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to measure fares in licensed vehicles. Although this use was welcomed as a system for operators to manage and dispatch vehicles to customers and to effectively calculate the fare for the journey, it was reported that no GPS system currently complied with the requirements of The Measuring Instruments (Taximeters) Regulations 2006. Consequently, they could not be used as an approved taximeter.

It was explained that the proposal was to add a condition to clarify the current legal status of GPS taxi management and dispatch systems.

It was reported that no arrangement was in place for hackney carriages in Gwynedd to have their taximeters tested periodically. In response to this conditions were proposed for taxi vehicle owners to ensure that taximeters are working appropriately; providing a certificate to confirm that the taximeter complies with the approved specification; is installed in accordance with The Measuring Instruments (Taximeters) Regulations (2006); has been calibrated to include only Gwynedd Council tariffs. It will be a requirement for the proprietor to produce a certificate annually to the Licensing Authority to prove that taximeter is accurate. In order to promote the changes, it was proposed that the Licensing Unit should establish a list of approved taximeter installers/testers to install and undertake the annual tests.

It was noted that it would be necessary to consult with the trade regarding the changes to hackney vehicle licensing conditions. This would be undertaken as part of the wider consultation on the review of taxi licence policies.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- That the recommendation was welcomed and ensured consistency.
- It would be timely to receive legal advice on the use of GPS instruments.
- That the policy was being reviewed in response to changes in technology.
- There was a managerial advantage to use GPS and therefore it was necessary to ensure that both systems worked jointly.

In response to a question regarding who would check the adaptations to taximeters, it was noted that it would be the responsibility of the companies to comply with the proposed conditions.

In response to a question regarding ensuring that the taxi driver was a 'safe driver' (following a recent incident of revoking a driver's licence due to drug use), it was noted that the Licensing Unit usually received information through the trade. If the Licensing Unit had concerns or if information came to hand from the public about a driver acting inappropriately then the Unit would make a request to the Police for information. As a result of the changes to the Data Protection Act, it was highlighted that it was not now necessary for the Police to automatically share information with the Unit about individuals who had recently offended.

Following the response, it was suggested that a letter should be sent to the Police Commissioner highlighting the Committee's concerns on sharing personal information issues.

Following a response from the Officer that Gwynedd Council set the fare tariffs by following a legal system, a request was received from the Members for a list of price rates.

RESOLVED to accept the information.

7. REVIEW OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL TAXI POLICIES

An oral update from the Licensing Manager was provided on the process of reviewing all Gwynedd Council taxi policies and the Members were reminded that the intention was to submit one unitary policy which would include the Committee's decision to implement sections 165, 166 and 167 of the Equality Act. It was added that the Licensing Unit had informally consulted with the trade and had received some comments. It was stated that one general observation was that they objected to changes in policies concerning accessible vehicles for wheelchairs and argued that the situation was unfair.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- That adapting the policy for accessible vehicles to wheelchairs was a response to the requirements of the Well-being Act.
- Taxi companies had to address the need.
- It was suggested that a future vision should be for every taxi to be a multi-purpose vehicle.
- A suggestion that every Local Authority across north Wales expressed their views as one to try and force every taxi to be multi-purpose in the future.

The Solicitor advised that the Licensing Unit should submit a report to the Committee in order to get clarification regarding the options and guidance on the way forward in order to come to a resolution.

The information was ACCEPTED.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.00am